

Pragmatic Analyses of Martin Luther King (Jr)'s Speech: "I Have a Dream" - An Introspective Prognosis

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Abstract

This paper investigates the speech of Martin Luther King (Jr.) titled: "I Have a Dream", presented in 1963 at the Lincoln Memorial. This speech is selected for use because it involves a speaker and an audience who belong to a particular speech community. The speech is about the failed promises by the Americans whose dream advocate equality for all. The pragmatic analysis adopted in this paper anchors on the illocutionary force of the speech acts theory, following the five classifications by Seale (1975), with the aim of identifying the speech acts and the sentence structures found in the speech. The authors attempt an introspective probe into the far-reaching outcome of the speech made some six decades ago. Adopting a pragmastatistic approach, the authors reveal the speaker's use of the five illocutionary acts and five major structural sentence sub-types, all of which point to the future state of the American people, including African-Americans. There are excessive use of representatives (43%) and simple sentences (40.3%). Directives constituted 16 sentences or 22.2% and declaratives, 15 sentences or 20.8% while commisives made up 8 sentences accounting for 11.1%. There is less use of expressives which sum up to 3 out of 72 sentences representing 4.1%. The compound and compound-complex sub-types constitute 7 and 14 sentences each accounting for 9.7% and 19.4% respectively. Multiple sentence records the fewest number with 3 sentences accounting for 4.2% out of 72. From these analyses, we observed excessive use of representatives, directives and declaratives for speech acts on the one hand, and simple, complex and compound-complex sentences on the other. The sentences typically portray the reality of the injustice meted out on the Negros and how the speaker made effective use of words within specific contexts to influence the audience so as to bring a lasting solution to their problem. Based on an in depth pragmatic evaluation, the authors conclude introspectively, that this speech has been instrumental to shaping the ultimate vision of American leadership towards justice and equality in the present dispensation, and is instrumental to re-the Negros.

Keywords: Pragmatic Analyses, Martin Luther King (Jr),Speech, American, Introspection, Prognosis

1. Introduction

The society we find ourselves, like every other society, has a way of reading meaning to every utterance made by a speaker to his audience. Every utterance is determined by the situation, event or occurrence at a given point in time. The study through which meaning in context is derived belongs to the domain of pragmatics. Pragmatics "is the study of language use" (Levinson, 1983, p.5). It simply refers to how language is used in a particular situation and at a given time. In other words, pragmatics is needed if we want fuller, deeper and generally more reasonable account of the human language. The study of pragmatics, however, has been of great interest over the years, and recently, to scholars in different disciplines such as linguistics, philosophy, semiotics, and psychology, because of its role in communication and language use. It has also played great roles in the study of public speech, in which the speaker tends to inform, influence or entertain and persuade the listener or audience.

This paper, therefore, undertakes a pragmatic analysis of a great speech titled, "*I Have a Dream*" by Martin Luther King (Jr.), an African-American pastor, civil right activist and leader of the then Montgomery movement. He delivered this speech to a large number of over 250,000 civil right supporters on August 28, 1963, from the steps of the Lincoln Memorial, where he called for an end to racism in the United States. The speech is a defining moment of the American civil right movement, where the speaker tries to persuade and influence the audience to fight for their freedom, as well as end slavery and racism. Using the speech acts theory as a framework, this study focuses its analysis on the five classifications of the illocutionary force. The study equally examines the sentence types used by the speaker in expressing his ideas.

2. Background to the Study

Language as a means of communication plays a very vital role in a given human society. The use of language in communication may be within an individual (intra-personal), between two people or group (inter-personal) or within a group (intra-group) or between groups of people (inter-group). The overall aim is communication in a community which understands the values, culture and the meaning of words and expressions uttered in such a community. However, when a conversation is going on between two parties (speaker and hearer / audience), each of them play a vital role. The speaker who is seen as the most active member of the conversation tend to inform, influence and persuade the audience, while the audience in turn tries to derive meaning from what he or

she has encoded from the conversation at that given occasion. This is to say that meaning is derived based on a particular situation and context of speech. The study which borders on the use of language in speech community and how meaning is derived through context is referred to as pragmatics.

Utterances are made based on the situation, occasion and time. Therefore, context is an important component of communication. In this regard, Mey (2001, p. 14) observes that “context is the quintessential of pragmatic concept; it is by definition, proactive, just as people are”. This implies that, context is the essence or one of the most important features in the study of pragmatics. In other words, utterances made within a context foster meaning. Therefore, oratory or speech must include issues in the society and must have an effect on the audience.

The speech of the great African-American orator, preacher, humanitarian and civil rights activist, Martin Luther King (Jr.), pays more attention to the injustice, racial discrimination, oppression and inequality meted out on the blacks by whites in the American society, and shows how those issues can be resolved through a particular ideology. These issues are not aligned with the American dream. The American dream is rooted in the United States declaration of independence which proclaims that: “all men are created equal” and that they are “endowed by their creator with certain inalienable rights, including ‘life’, ‘liberty’ and the pursuit of happiness (The American Dream). The dream preaches freedom and equality for all and the opportunity to benefit from the resources endowed in the American society, through hard work.

According to Emenyi (2004, p. 65), “the American dream states that all citizens have equal opportunity to achieving success through determination, education, and hardwork”. But, as at the time King made this popular speech, the blacks appeared to have been restricted from benefiting from these rights. This was due to the fact that they were regarded as ‘nobody’ and evil people, and the tacit conclusion was that nothing good could come out of the blacks. The Africans are usually seen as the descendants of Cain and this conception underscores the idea that the mark God gave to Cain for killing Abel his brother is a black skin (Emenyi, 2004, p. 65). This shows that the American dream, which is for all, is now a nightmare for the African-Americans. The blacks began to lose hope in themselves, accepting the notion that they were ‘nobody’.

However, there was a re-definition of self for the Negro and the need to emphasize self assertion. This is built on the encouraging speeches of many African-American leaders, and especially, those of Martin Luther King (Jr.) who was like a saviour and pioneer of the American freedom. His speeches are like a brim of hope which promised a better future for the African-Americans and this is aptly portrayed in his most iconic speech: “I Have a Dream”, which was delivered on August 28, 1963. This great speech, however, is the focus of the analysis undertaken in this article (see Akwa Ibom Broadcasting Corporation (AKBC) Documentary of 11th January, 2014).

3. Brief Bio-data of Martin Luther King (Jr.)

Martin Luther King (Jr.) was an American Pastor, activist and humanitarian leader in the African-American civil rights movement. Born on January 15, 1929 to Reverend and Mrs. Martin Luther King Snr. (the former Alberta Christian Williams) in Atlanta, Georgia, King attended David T. Howard Elementary school, Atlanta University Laboratory School and Booker T. Washington High School from 1935-1944. He was best known for his role in the advancement of civil rights through the use of non-violent civil disobedience, which is based on his Christian belief (Washington, J. M. 1992, p. xxiii).

Previously named Michael King, his father changed his name in favour of the German reformer, Martin Luther. A Baptist minister, King became a civil rights activist early in his career. He led the 1955 Montgomery bus boycott and helped found the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) in 1957, serving as its first president. With the SCLC, King led an unsuccessful struggle against segregation in Albany, Georgia in 1962, and organized non-violent protests in Birmingham, Alabama, that attracted national attention following television news coverage of the brutal police response. King also helped to organize the 1963 march on Washington, where he delivered his popular speech: ‘I Have a Dream’. There, he established his reputation as the greatest orator, in American history (Wikipedia, the free online Encyclopedia).

In 1956, he was arrested and charged for travelling thirty miles an hour in twenty-five miles an hour zone in Montgomery. In October 14, 1964, King received the Nobel peace prize for combating racial inequality through non-violent means. In the final year of his life, King expanded his focus to include poverty and the Vietnam War, alienating many of his liberal allies with the 1967 speech titled, “Beyond Vietnam”. He was assassinated on April 4, 1968 in Memphis, Tennessee (Wikipedia the free online Encyclopedia).

4. Statement of the Problem

The American society was structured along racial line. This problem of inequality has plagued the life of the African-Americans since the declaration of independence by Great Britain in 1776. The whites see themselves as superior to the black race. As a result, the blacks do not benefit from the economic, social and political life of the American society. During this period, the agitation of the blacks for equality was what inspired the civil rights

movement from 1955-1968 which culminated in Martin Luther King (Jr.)'s speech we are considering in this study. This speech brings into the black consciousness the need to come together through non-violent means to fight for their rights as citizens. It could be said that King's speech served as a catalyst for the emancipation and integration of the blacks into the mainstream American society. We are, however, looking at how the speech serves as a milestone in black struggle for equality within the American society. Did it serve as an instrument that projected the black Americans as a force to be reckoned with within the American socio-political establishment? Did it provide the required motivation upon which future American society and ideologies could be re-constructed? These are some of the questions which provide the main focus of this paper.

5. Objectives of the Study

This paper aims at achieving the following objectives:

- i. to analyze the pragmatic contents and sentence structures of the speech using the speech acts theory;
- ii. to examine how the speaker made effective use of the speech to advocate for equality and address racism;
- iii. to identify the socio-economic and political ideology inherent in the speech.

6. Significance of the Study

This paper is meant to increase the awareness of readers about the American dream and the rate of injustice meted out on the Negroes, and how the speech has been able to come to reality through the dream of Martin Luther (Jr.) which is rooted in the American dream. The study also contributes to scholarship and makes a spirited attempt to prove, rather introspectively, that this speech ultimately made possible the emergence of an African-American, President Barrack Obama (for the first time in American history), as an American President.

7. Theoretical Framework

We use language all the time to make things happen. Therefore, linguists have called this process the speech acts theory. In this paper, the pragmatic analysis of the speech, "I Have a Dream" by Martin Luther King (Jr.), will be anchored on the speech acts theory, paying particular attention to the illocutionary acts, and the five classifications of the acts shall be explored for an insightful analysis.

The speech acts theory is seen recently as the most important established part of pragmatics. For Andrian, Richard, Ann and Robert (2001, p.394), "speech acts are performed in uttering expressions". Supporting this view, Wikipedia, the online Dictionary, defines speech acts thus: "a speech act in linguistics and the philosophy of language is an utterance that has performative function in language and communication". Furthermore, the contemporary use of the term goes back to J.L Austin's definition of performative utterance and his theory of locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary acts. Austin (1962) observes three types of acts which include:

1. Locutionary acts- acts of vocalizing a sentence with a certain sense and reference;
2. Illocutionary acts- acts of making requests, necessity (transition effect). In this case, it is noted that uttering a sentence to perform a particular illocutionary act will normally have some effects on the addressee;
3. Perlocutionary acts- these are acts in which, saying something normally produce certain consequential effect upon the feeling, thought or action of the audience or the speaker or of other persons; and it may be done with the design, intended or purpose producing them (Michael, L.G. 1995).

Mey (2001, p.94) opines that, "the language we use, and in particular, the speech we utter are entirely dependent on the context of the situation in which such acts are produced". Furthermore, Searle (1975) sets up the following classification of speech acts:

- i. Representatives or Assertives- the speaker becomes committed to the truth of the propositional content. For instance, making assertion, claim, description, hypothesis, conclusion, report, suggestion, predictions, as well as making statements of fact.
- ii. Directives- the speaker tries to get the hearer to act in such a way as to fulfill what is represented by the content of the proposition. For example, questioning, commanding, requesting, pleading, inviting, insisting, challenging.
- iii. Commissives- the speaker commits himself/herself to a future cause of action, for example, making promises, pledges, vows, undertaking, wants and so on.
- iv. Expressives- again, the speaker expresses an attitude to or about the state of affairs, for example, apologizing, appreciation, congratulation, thanks, welcome, scolding and so on.
- v. Declaratives- the speaker alters the external status or condition of an object or situation, solely by making the utterance: for example, "I pronounce you husband and wife; "I sentence you to be hanged by the neck.

So, speech acts theory holds that words are connected to action and the illocutionary acts is considered the most

important.

8. Review of Relevant Literature on Pragmatics

The development of pragmatics has been made possible in the recent years due to some contributions made by scholars. Ndimele (1997, p.106) says “pragmatics takes into account such notion as the intention of the speaker, the effect of the speaker’s utterance on the listener, the implications that follow from expressing something in a particular way, and the knowledge and belief about the world upon which both the speaker and the listener rely when they interact. It is concerned with aspects of language use, understanding and appropriateness of expressions due to context”.

Levinson (1983, p.4) believes that pragmatics studies language from a functional perspective, that is, it attempts to explain facts of linguistic structure by referring to nonlinguistic pressure and causes. Again, to this source, “pragmatics is the study of relations between language and context that are basic to an account of language and understanding....” The author further opines:

The term pragmatics is attributed to the philosopher, Charles Morris (1935), who was concerned with outlining the general shape of a science of sign and semiotics. Morris distinguished three branches of inquiry: syntactic, being the study of the formal relations of sign of one another; semantics, the study of the relations of sign to the object to which sign is applicable; and pragmatics, the study of the relations of sign to interpretation.

According to Akwanya (2007, p. 122), “pragmatics is a theory of language use in conversation which was originally suggested by Bar-Hillel in 1950, and it has been made use of since the late 1970”. This source tries to explain how it is that sentences with definable meaning can be used to convey messages that have no relation whatsoever to their linguistic content. Again, Levinson (1983, p.24) says, “Pragmatics is the study of the ability of language users to pair sentences with context with which they are appropriate”.

For Mey (2001, p. 6), “pragmatics studies the use of language in human communication as determined by the condition of the society....” The proper domain of pragmatics would then be what Chomsky has called performance, that is to say, the way the individual goes about using language (Mey, 2001 p. 4). The online Wikipedia has it that, philosophers who have played very important roles in the development of pragmatics include: Wittgenstein, Morris, Austin, Searle, Levinson, Leech, Pierce, Carnap and so on. Morris who played the important role in the first stage of the development of pragmatics, held an opinion that the study of pragmatics must involve the aspects of the society, of psychology, of culture, and other things that affect the symbols and their meanings. Carnap (1959) had very similar idea with Morris. He thought that the study of pragmatics should be on the relationship between the users and the word, as well as the reference of the words. Bar-Hillel, the student of Carnap, suggested that the study of pragmatics should have definite aim, and he claimed that the definite aim should be deictic such as ‘I’, ‘Here’, ‘now’ (1954, p.4). Austin and Searle put forward the speech acts theory, which was the most influential topic in the study of pragmatics during the second stage.

For Udofot (1998, p. 127), “pragmatics is therefore, in the main, a contextual theory except that it includes all that can be discussed under context, culture, style, society and their influence on meaning interpretation”. She also indicates that:

three factors are considered in pragmatics to be essential in discovering the meaning of an expression (literal and unstable). These are: the situation in which the utterance is produced; the shared previous knowledge or common Cultural background of the speaker and the hearer; and the linguistic context in which the utterance occurs.

9. A CURSORY SURVEY OF THE CONTENTS OF MARTIN LUTHER KING (Jr.)’S SPEECH: “I HAVE A DREAM”

“I Have a Dream” is a public speech delivered by the American civil rights activist, Martin Luther King (Jr.) on August 28, 1963. There are seventy-two sentences in the speech. Also observed in the speech are repetitions of phrases in some of the sentences. Early in the speech, King urges his audience to seize the moment and make real the promises of democracy, for example, ‘now is the time....’ This is repeated three times in the sixth paragraph. The most repeated phrase which appear eight times from paragraph seventeen to twenty-two is: ‘I Have a Dream’. With this phrase, King paints a picture of integration and unified America for his audience. The repetition of this theme, therefore, is the part that makes the speech most famous. Other occasions of repetition in the speech are: ‘we can never be satisfied’ (repeated six times from paragraph twelve to fourteen); “one hundred years later” (repeated four times in the second paragraph), where he emphasizes that a hundred years later, after the Emancipation proclamation, the Negros are still treated as slaves in their own land which is endowed with material prosperity. Again, ‘with this faith’ is repeated three times, ‘let freedom ring’ is repeated nine times which is also important and most repeated; and ‘free at last’ is repeated three times.

The speech begins with a reference to Emancipation proclamation, which freed millions of slaves in 1863. But King observes that ‘one hundred years later’ the Negro is still not free. The proclamation came as a joyous daybreak to end the long night of captivity. He also describes the promise made by America as a ‘promissory note’ on which America has defaulted. He stresses that “America has given the Negro people a bad cheque”, but that they have come to cash this cheque. King then concludes: ‘with this faith we will be able to hew out of the mountain of despair a stone of hope’. He describes his dreams of freedom and equality as one arising from the land of slavery and hatred. Hence, his dream is rooted in the American dream. It is this dream that provides an in depth insight (that is, an introspection) into the future political philosophy through which American people could derive inspiration.

The speech also draws extensively from the Bible, and the speaker made use of prophetic voice which added power to the speech. He spoke with urgency that the situation they are facing must end if America is to attain its height. He called for the “fierce urgency of now”- so as to get speedy action of solving the menace of racial segregation. The speech is like an appeal to America as a nation founded to provide freedom and justice to all men, to do so on grounds of racial justice which, to King, is also in accord with God’s will. He also noted that the future of the Americans was ‘bound’ or tied up together.

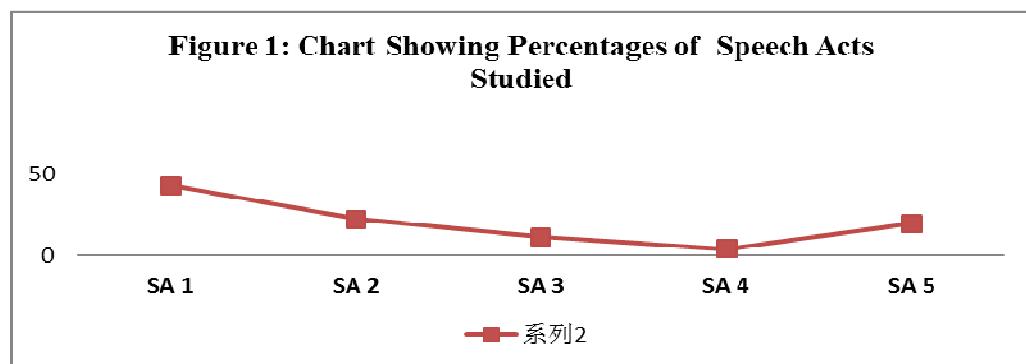
Furthermore, his symbolic use of Mississippi does not mean a dry or rainless land per se, but it creates the image of water to represent freedom. He also paints a picture that, there is hope for the Negro because of their faith, when he made use of the phrase ‘stone of hope’. He also made use of the symbol ‘mountain of despair’ which is the menace of racial segregation which they will ‘hew’ through their faith. And America can all work together in harmony and to achieve their dream as one, and great nation, through the use of symphony orchestra that plays together in harmony. All of them, he maintained, whether Jews or Gentiles, Catholics or Protestants, will join hands together to sing the song of the old Negro spiritual that they are ‘free at last’.

10. Data Presentation / Analysis

The data for this study is a published speech from the media. The speech has been produced according to the number of sentences which are found in the publication before analysis. The categorization of the utterances into speech acts as presented in the analysis follows the illocutionary force which is classified into five stages by Searle (1975). The analysis of sentence structure in the speech is carried out according to Ufot (2009, p.307-308), which states that “a simple sentence consists of just one main clause, and it may range from the basic pattern of only two constituent elements called the subject and predicate, to the largest... subject, predicate, complement, and adjunct”; the compound sentence contains two or more main clauses, joined together by coordinate conjunctions. The complex sentence is signaled by a main clause linked with a subordinate clause by means of one of the subordinators or relative pronouns. The compound-complex sentence consists of one main or coordinate clause with one or more subordinate clauses joined together by coordinate clauses as well as subordinators. The multiple sentence consists of two main clauses, joined together by coordinate conjunctions. All these are represented in table 2 below.

Table 1: Summary of Speech Acts in the Speech Studied

Speech Acts Items Tested	Frequency	Percentage
Representatives /Assertives	31	43.0%
Directives	16	22.2%
Commissives	8	11.1%
Expressive	3	4.1%
Declaratives	14	19.4%
Total	72	99.8%

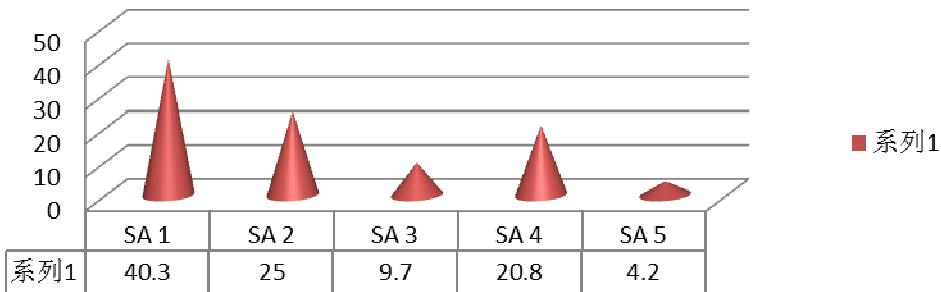


Key: SA 1: Representatives/Assertives; SA 2: Directives; SA 3: Commissives; SA 4: Expressives; SA 5: Declaratives.

Table 2: Summary of Sentence Structures Studied

Sentence Type	Frequency	Percentage
Simple	29	40.3%
Compound	7	9.7%
Complex	18	25%
Compound-complex	15	20.8%
Multiple	3	4.2
Total	72	100%

Figure 2: Chart Showing Percentages of Sentence Types



Key: SA 1: Simple Sentence; SA 2: Complex Sentence; SA 3: Compound Sentence; SA 4: Compound-Complex Sentence; SA 5: Multiple Sentence

11. Discussion of Findings

Table 1 represents the speech acts found in the speech. The table indicates that there is an excessive use of representatives with 43% followed by directives with 22.2%, declaratives accounted for 19.4% and commissives 11.1%, while there appear to be less use of expressives, which accounted for 4.1%. The speech acts type with the highest frequency is the representatives or assertives with 31 out of 72 sentences accounting for 43%. Representatives in the speech comprise of assertion, claim, conclusion, suggestion, report, prediction and statement of fact. For example, Sentence 2 - “Five score years ago, a great American in whose symbolic shadow we stand today, signed the Emancipation proclamation”; Sentence 10 -“It is obvious today that America has defaulted on this promissory note in so far as her citizens of color are concerned”; and Sentence 19 -“Nineteen-sixty three is not an end but a beginning”. These sentences represent statements of fact and assertions. Directives follow with 16 sentences out of 72 amounting to 22.2%. The directives in the speech include: questions, commands, and requests, pleading, inviting, and insisting. Requesting, pleading and insisting play major roles in the speech. For example, Sentence 25 reads: “Let us not seek to satisfy our thirst for freedom by drinking from the cup of bitterness and hatred”; and Sentence 26 makes an appeal: “We must forever conduct our struggle on the high place of dignity and discipline”. We also have a request like in Sentence 47: “Let us not wallow in the valley of despair”.

Commissives is made up of 8 sentences out of 72, accounting for 11.1%. The commissives contain promises, vows, threats, guarantees, warnings, bettings and challenges. For example, Sentence 21- “There will be neither rest nor tranquility in America until the Negro is granted citizenship right”; Sentence 57- “This is our hope”; Sentence 58- “This is the faith that I go back to South with” are all sentences that represent commissives.. Expressives appear to be the least used acts in the speech, with only 3 sentences out of 72 which amount to 4.1%. The expressives include congratulations, thanks, appreciation, greetings, scolding and complaints. Examples are seen in Sentence 1:“ I am happy to join with you today in what will go down in history as the greatest demonstration for freedom in the history of our nation”; Sentence 20- “And those who hope that the Negros needed to blow up steam and will now be content, will have a rude awakening if the nation returns to business as usual”; and Sentence 21 -“But there is something I must say to my people who stand on the warm threshold which leads into the palace of justice”. Finally, the declaratives in the speech are made up of 14 sentences (that is, 19.1%) out of the 72 sentences examined in the corpus. The declaratives in the speech is that of passing statements and making declarations or utterance. For example, Sentence 53 reads: “I have a dream today!”; Sentence 14 -“We have also come to this hall ... to remind Americans of the fierce urgency of now”; and Sentence 66 reads: “Let freedom ring from the snow-capped Rockies of Colorado”. All the speaker tries to do is to spur the audience not to relent in their fight for freedom, and the fight for freedom must commence immediately. The speaker appears to be optimistic that, though emancipation tarries, one day the Negro will

achieve their goal of being free from oppression, inequality, segregation and injustice. It is obvious from these analyses, both logically and introspectively, that these statements must have left behind indelible marks in the sands of time in America, to the extent that an African-American (President Barrack Obama) had finally emerged through the electoral process and occupied (for the first time in American history) the white house as a president.

Table 2 indicates that the speaker made use of the five kinds of structural sentences with great difference. It is obvious that the speaker made excessive use of simple sentences that accounted for 40.3% in the speech. Examples could be illustrated with the following sentences: Sentence 4 – “It came as a joyous daybreak to end the long night of their captivity”; Sentence 33 – “We cannot turn back”; Sentence 47 – “Let us not wallow in the valley of despair”. The compound sentences used amount to 9.7%. Examples include: Sentence 15 – “This is not the time to engage in the luxury of cooling off or to take the tranquilizing drug of gradualism”; Sentence 19 – “Nineteen sixty-three is not an end but a beginning”. The complex sentence forms 25%. For example, Sentence 1 reads: “I am happy to join with you today in what will go down in history as the greatest demonstration for freedom in the history of our nation”; Sentence 18 - “This sweltering summer of the Negro’s legitimate discontent will not pass until there is an invigorating autumn of freedom and equality”; and Sentence 22: “The whirlwind of revolt will continue to shake the foundation of our nation until the bright day of justice emerge”. The compound-complex sentence amounts to 20.8%. The following sentences illustrate this: Sentence 39 – “We cannot be satisfied as long as the Negro in Mississippi cannot vote and a Negro in New York believes that he has nothing for which to vote”; Sentence 20 - “And those who hope that the Negros needed to blow up steam and will now be content, will have a rude awakening if the nation returns to business as usual”. The speech also contains 3 multiple sentences accounting for 4.2%. This could be illustrated with the following examples: Sentence 5: But one hundred years later, the Negro still is not free; one hundred years later, the life of the Negro is still sadly crippled by the manacles of segregation and the chains of discrimination; one hundred years, the Negro lives on a lonely island of poverty in the midst of a vast ocean of material prosperity; one hundred years later, the Negro is still languishing in the corner of American society and finds himself in exile in his own land; and Sentence 46 - “Go back to Mississippi; go back to Alabama; go back to south Carolina; go back to Georgia; go back to Louisiana; go back to the slums and ghettos of the north cities, knowing that somehow this situation can and will be changed”.

These analyses, therefore, show that the simple sentence carries the highest percentage (40.3%) because of the need to be pungent and laconic and to punctuate the speech at intervals, making it more forceful with the use of active verbs than could be found with all the other sentence types. We found that out of 72 sentences, simple sentences were used 29 times, accounting for 40.3%. Compound sentence structures amounted to 7 out of 72 sentences, accounting for 9.7%; 18 out of the 72 sentences studied are of the complex sentence structure, amounting to 25% while compound-complex sentences occurred 15 times amounting to 20.8%.

In the speech, one finds that all the sentence types are typically expressive of the American dream. For instance, the simple sentences are employed when the speaker makes statement that requires the audience’ participation in the fight for freedom, particularly, the few last sentences from 63 -70, which build up to the dénouement, and then to a climactic peak before the resolution. Besides, The simple sentences are laconic enough to compare with the report of Shakespear’s character, Ceasar in Julius Ceasar: “I came. I saw. I conquered.” (see <http://www.answers.com/Q/I>). Just as terse and forceful as Ceasar’s statement was in this instance, King’s simple sentences prepared grounds for revolutionary reactions from his audience. This is anchored on the fact that he had a dream that needed to be translated into reality for a brighter future for American Negros. Some of the compound sentences expressed the reality of what the African-Americans were going through in the American society. Furthermore, the complex sentences and the compound-complex forms try to emphasize the situations of the Negros and how their agitations could produce tangible results that could lead to the Negros’ freedom at last. The multiple sentences such as Sentences 5, 16 and 46 aimed at building up a climactic action through motivation of the audience to a reactionary vision towards total emancipation of the Negros from racism, inequality and political strangulation.

12. Conclusion

In conclusion, this paper has been able to prove that pragmatics as a discipline and tool for analysis, is very important as long as human beings communicate in their different environment on different occasions, contexts and shared knowledge. The findings of this paper show that the speaker made use of the five stages of the illocutionary acts and five structural sentence types to convey his message to his audience clearly. In the speech acts, the most used form is the representative which amount to 43% against 22.2%, 11.1%, 4.1% and 19.4% of the directives, commissives, expressives and declaratives respectively. Through the excessive use of the representatives or assertive of the illocutionary acts by the speaker, one found that the speaker is able to predict the future of the African-American society, that one day, they will live together as brothers and that they will be free at last. He was also able to make suggestions, reports, claims, and conclusions as well as state some facts

which point out the reality of injustice meted out on the Negroes. Those statements guaranteed freedom to future Negroes in an anticipated, transformed American society which they hoped to get at last. It is obvious that the directives are used in the speech to spur the audience to action and the declaratives which follows helped the speaker to declare freedom that the Negroes agitate for, which is in consonance with his ultimate dream.

Also, the findings show that the speaker made excessive use of the simple sentence in terms of structure, which amount to 43%. The simple sentences capture the reality of the failed promises made by the American government to emancipate, proclaim and declare freedom to the racially oppressed and marginalized Negroes. The complex sentences recorded 20.8% and they mostly emphasized some key elements of the discourse while the compound sentences with 9.7% and the compound-complex forms with 20.8% were some of those sentences that portray the theme of the speech.

This paper, therefore, has been able to show how effective the speaker made use of words within the context of their situation and environment to influence the audience towards bringing a lasting solution to their problem. The consequence is the transformed American society, free from oppression, nepotism, racial prejudice, inequality, impoverishment and partisanship; a society where the Negro is now free to vote and be voted for. One final introspection is that this speech has been instrumentally a potent tool for the transformation of the American society, and ultimately the re-positioning of the Negro people in America for a better, more progressive future.

13. References

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14. Appendix

Sentences in the speech

1. I am happy to join with you in what will go down in history as the greatest demonstration for freedom in the history of our nation (**CS**)
2. Five score years ago, a great American, in whose symbolic shadow we stand today, signed the Emancipation proclamation (**CS**)
3. This momentous decree came as a beacon light of hope to millions of Negro slaves who had been seared in the flame of withering injustice (**CS**)
4. It came as a joyous daybreak to end the long night of their captivity (**SS**)
5. But one hundred years later, the Negro still is not free; one hundred years later, the life of the Negro is still sadly crippled by the manacles of segregation and the chains of discrimination; one hundred years, the Negro lives on a lonely island of poverty in the midst of a vast ocean of material prosperity; one hundred years later, the Negro is still languishing in the corner of American society and finds himself in exile in his own land (**MS**).
6. So we've come here today to dramatize a shameful condition (**SS**)
7. In a sense, we've come to our nation's capital to cash a check (**CS**)
8. When the architect of our republic wrote the magnificent word of the constitution and the declaration of independence, they were signing a promissory note to which every American was to fall heir (**CCS**)
9. This note was the promise that all men, yes, black men as well as white men, would be guaranteed the unalienable right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness (**CS**)

10. It is obvious today that America has defaulted in this promissory note in so far as her citizens of colour are concerned (**CS**)
11. Instead of honoring this sacred obligation, America has given the Negro people a bad check, a check which has come back marked ‘insufficient fund’ (**CCS**)
12. We refuse to believe that there are insufficient funds in the great vaults of opportunity of this nation (**SS**)
13. And so we’ve come to cash this check, a check that will give us upon demand the riches of freedom and security of justice (**CPS**)
14. We have also come to this hallowed spot to remind America of the fierce urgency of now (**SS**)
15. This is no time to engage in the luxury of cooling off or to take the tranquilizing drug of gradualism (**CPS**)
16. Now is the time to make real the promises of democracy; now is the time to rise from the dark and desolate valley of segregation to the sunlight path of racial justice; now is the time to lift our nation from the quicksand of racial injustice to the solid rock of brotherhood; now is the time to make justice a reality for all God’s children (**MS**)
17. It would be fatal for the nation to overlook the urgency of the moment (**SS**)
18. This sweltering summer of the Negro’s legitimate discontent will not pass until there is an invigorating autumn of freedom and equality (**CS**)
19. Nineteen sixty-three is not an end but a beginning (**CPS**)
20. And those who hope that the Negro will blow off steam and will now be content, will have a rude awakening if the nation returns to business as usual (**CCS**)
21. There will be neither rest nor tranquility in America until the Negro is granted his citizenship right (**CS**)
22. The whirlwinds of revolt will continue to shake the foundation of our nation until the bright day of justice emerges (**CS**)
23. But there is something I must say to my people who stand on the threshold which leads into the palace of justice (**CS**)
24. In the process of gaining our rightful place, we must not be guilty of wrongful deeds (**SS**)
25. Let us not seek to satisfy our thirst for freedom by drinking from the cup of bitterness and hatred (**CPS**)
26. We must forever conduct our struggle on the high plane of dignity and discipline (**SS**)
27. We must not allow our creative protest to degenerate into physical violence (**SS**)
28. Again and again, we must rise to a majestic heights of meeting physical force with soul force (**SS**)
29. The marvelous new militancy which has engulf the Negro community must not lead us to a distrust of all white people; for many of our white brothers, as evidenced by their presence here today, have come to realize that their destiny is tied up with our destiny and they have come to realize that their freedom is inextricably bound to our freedom (**CCS**)
30. This offence we share, mounted to storm the battlements of injustice, must be carried out forth by a biracial army (**SS**)
31. We cannot walk alone (**SS**)
32. And as we walk we must make the pledge that we shall always march ahead (**CS**)
33. We cannot turn back (**SS**)
34. There are those who are asking the devotees of civil rights, when will you be satisfied? (**SS**)
35. We can never be satisfied as long as the Negro is the victim of the unspeakable horror of police brutality (**CS**)
36. We can never be satisfied as long as our bodies heavy with fatigue of travel, cannot gain lodging in the motels of the highways and the hotels of the cities (**CCS**)
37. We cannot be satisfied as long as the Negro’s basic mobility is from a smaller ghetto to a large one (**CS**)
38. We can never be satisfied as long as our children are stripped of their selfhood and robbed of their dignity by signs stating “for whites only” (**CPS**)
39. We cannot be satisfied as long as a Negro in Mississippi cannot vote and a Negro in New York believes that he has nothing for which to vote (**CPS**)
40. No, we are not satisfied and we will not be satisfied until justice rolls down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream (**CCS**)
41. I am not unmindful that some of you came here out of excessive trial and tribulation (**CS**)
42. Some of you came fresh from narrow jail cells (**SS**)
43. Some of you have come from areas where your quest for freedom left you battered by the storm of persecution and staggered by the wind of police brutality (**CS**)
44. You have been the veteran of creative suffering (**SS**)
45. Continue to work with the faith that unearned suffering is redemptive (**CS**)
46. Go back to Mississippi; go back to Alabama; go back to South Carolina; go back to Georgia; go back to Louisiana; go back to the slums and ghettos of the Northern cities; knowing that somehow this situation can, and will be changed (**MS**)

47. Let us not wallow in the valley of despair (**SS**)
48. So I say to you, my friends, even though we must face the difficulties of today and tomorrow, I still have a dream (**CS**)
49. It is a dream deeply rooted in the American dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed - we hold these truths to be self evident that all men are created equal (**CCS**)
50. I have a dream that one day the red hills of Georgia, sons of former slaves and sons of former slaves owners will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood (**CCS**)
51. I have a dream that one day, even the state of Mississippi, a state sweltering with the heart of injustice, sweltering with the heart of oppression, will be transformed into an oasis of freedom and justice (**CCS**)
52. I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the colour of their skin but by the content of their character (**CCS**)
53. I have a dream today! (**SS**)
54. I have a dream that one day, down in Alabama, with its vicious racists, with its governor having his lips dripping with the words of interposition and nullification, that one day, right there in Alabama, little black boys and black girls will be able to join hands with little white boys and little white girls as sisters and brothers (**CCS**)
55. I have a dream today! (**SS**)
56. I have a dream that one day, every valley shall be exalted, every hill and mountain shall be made low, the rough places shall be made plain, and the crooked places shall be made straight and the glory of the Lord will be revealed and all flesh shall see it together (**CCS**)
57. This is our hope (**SS**)
58. This is the faith that I go back to the South with (**CS**)
59. With this faith, we will be able to hew out of the mountain of despair a stone of hope (**SS**)
60. With this faith, we will be able to transform the jangling discord of our nation into a beautiful symphony of brotherhood (**SS**)
61. With this faith, we will be able to work together, to pray together, to struggle together, to go to jail together, to stand up for freedom together, knowing that we will be free one day (**CCS**)
62. This will be the day when all God's children will be able to sing with new meaning- "my country 'tis of thee; sweet land of liberty; of thee I sing; land where my father died, land of pilgrim's pride; from every mountain side, let freedom ring"- and if America is to be a great nation, this must become true (**CCS**)
63. So let freedom ring from the prodigious hilltops of New Hampshire (**SS**)
64. Let freedom ring from the mighty mountains of New York (**SS**)
65. Let freedom ring from the heightening Alleghenies of Pennsylvania (**SS**)
66. Let freedom ring from the snow-capped Rockies of Colorado (**SS**)
67. Let freedom ring from the curvaceous slopes of California (**SS**)
68. But not only that (**SS**)
69. Let freedom ring from the stone mountain of Georgia (**SS**)
70. Let freedom ring from the lookout mountain of Tennessee (**SS**)
71. Let freedom ring from every hill and molehill of Mississippi, from every mountainside, let freedom ring (**CPS**)
72. And when we allow freedom to ring, when we let it ring from every villages and hamlet, from every state and city, we will be able to speed up that day when all God's children, black men and white men, Jews and Gentiles, Catholics and Protestants – will be able to join hands and sing in the words of the old Negro spiritual, "free at last, free at last; thank God Almighty, we are free at last" (**CCS**)